## Scottish Influences, Especially Religious, in Colonial America

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Little needs to be said about the Scots in seventeenth-century colonial America, since so few set sail during that period for what was to become the United States. After the defeat at Bothwell Bridge many covenanters were transported to the American colonies (but mainly to Barbados) although one group settled in Carolina, accompanied by a young minister who remained in the colony until the Glorious Revolution — and soon after he returned to Scotland, William Dunlop was to become Principal of Glasgow University and a Scottish historiographer. A number of other unwilling travellers went, during the latter part of the century, to the colonies: criminals and vagrants sentenced by the Scottish courts to a penalty unknown to English law, banishment.<sup>1</sup>

The most dramatic and decisive seventeenth-century Scottish interest in the New World was, of course, the abortive Darien Scheme. Behind the movement was the longing of a country, recently set free from some of the burdens of theological controversy, to apply its energies to a career of industry and commerce, from which it hitherto had been excluded. For the Scottish nation, Darien was an economic loss which made the country more destitute than ever and, more than any other single event, brought Scotland to agree to the Act of Union. It certainly seemed clear that Scotland, on her own, would find it impossible to compete in the colonising game. Forbidden by the English Navigation Acts from trading with the English colonies prior to 1707, Scots were only doubtfully able to hold public office there and at least one colonial governor, Andrew Hamilton, of East New Jersey, was removed from office in 1698 because he was a Scot. For the brief period 1697-99 there was a total prohibition on the elevation of Scots to such offices but in 1699 the Attorney General of England ruled that "A Scotchman borne is by Law capable of being appointed Governor of any of the Plantac'ons, he being a natural born-Subject of England in Judgmt and Construcc'on of Law, as much as if he had been born in England."2 This important ruling sustained the long-held rights of common citizenship wrongfully denied to the Scots after the Restoration.

In 1701, the burgh of Stirling purchased two fathoms of rope "to tie Laurence M'Lairen quhen sent to America": see I. Graham, Colonists from Scotland (Ithaca, New York, 1956), 10.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Ibid., 142.

Still, there was early anti-Scots feeling in the colonies, and the king was petitioned in 1700 by a faction in East New Jersey which complained that that colony was up to its nose in Scots: Governor, Secretary, Attorney General, Clerk to the Supreme Court — all this, it was said to William, will be "to the great Hindrance of Your Ma[jes]tys Loyall Subjects (the Power of Government being chiefly in the Hands of Natives of Scotland)".3

Obviously, any Scot interested in colonial service or expansion would support the 1707 Union as a keen advantage for Scotland, a fact not lost on those many Englishmen also interested in the colonies. The Union provided a remarkable boon to the personal and economic interest of many a North Briton, and clearly this was to be so in the New World. The wretched and notorious Lord Cornbury had succeeded Andrew Hamilton as governor of East Jersey (as well as of New York), and when Cornbury was removed from office immediately after a court battle with Francis Makemie, a cornerstone in American religious liberty, a Scot was rushed back into office. Robert Hunter, in fact, was governor of four different colonies during the early eighteenth century, and Scots controlled East Jersey during most of the century before Independence. Hunter did have the weakness of showing partiality to his fellow-Scots in the colonies he governed, "not an uncommon weakness among the Scottish colonial governors" of no little importance since Graham goes on to estimate that during the eighteenth-century colonial period there were some 30 governors and lieutenant-governors of Scots' birth in the American colonies. Resentment would grow as the eighteenthcentury Scottish presence in the colonies grew. Yet one thing is certain: without it the development of the American colonies would have been vastly different.

The question of numbers and patterns of Scottish immigration into America during the eighteenth century still needs a great deal of attention, and the problems of historians in this field stem largely from the long tradition of lumping together Scots with Ulster Scots. A connected problem is that, in contrast to the Ulster Scots, so relatively few Scots migrated to America during the colonial period. Prior to 1763 there is no reliable estimate of the number of Scots — but they were small, to be sure. And during the 12 years before the outbreak of the War of Independence there were probably no more than 25,000<sup>5</sup> — and that figure may be too high — whereas, in the half-century before Independence, perhaps a quarter of a million Ulstermen settled in America. Moreover, except to a certain extent in New York,

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 143.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Ibid., 146.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 188-9.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> M. A. Jones, American Immigration (Chicago, 1969). 22.

Scots rarely went to the frontiers as did their Ulster cousins and the two groups therefore rarely mingled with one another in the New World.

Indeed, two groups of Scottish emigrants rarely mingled with each other, namely the Highlanders and Lowlanders. There was perhaps a natural lack of understanding between them anyway, but their patterns of migration to the New World ensured that a distance would be kept between them. The colony receiving by far the most Scots in the decade before Independence was North Carolina, this being the main destination of Highlanders fleeing from poverty, especially during the spring and summer of 1773. These were not the first Highlanders to see American soil, for many had been transported for their part in the Jacobite rebellions of 1715 and '45; nearly 1,000 of the 3,500 rebel prisoners taken at Culloden were banished to America, for instance. When they had to move they tended to move in their clans, and this clannishness was to be a distinctive mark of the Highlander in America. Several factors conspired together to keep him outside normal colonial life.

Thus, when Governor Oglethorpe of Georgia in 1736 visited the Highlanders' settlement he found them dressed in their tartans, armed with broad swords, small round shields and muskets. Forbidden to carry weapons in Scotland, they were nonetheless expected to do so in Georgia as a line of defence against the Spanish in Florida. And what was the name of this Scottish settlement, Georgia's most dangerously placed community, 50 miles south of Savannah? — Darien!

When Allan Macdonald landed with Flora in North Carolina in 1774, he wore a tartan plaid over his shoulder, a large blue bonnet with a cockade of black ribbon, a tartan waistcoat with gold buttons, and tartan hose. A year earlier, six Highlanders had run away from the ship Donald in Virginia, but were easily caught, as the Virginia Gazette of 15th April reported, since three of them "were habited in their own Country Garb" and only one of them could speak English. In fact, few of the Highland immigrants spoke English, and for several years after the arrival in Virginia of a group of Jacobite refugees the local court had to maintain a Gaelic interpreter. There even is a tantalising reference, yet to be supported by hard evidence, that some of the Jacobite exiles taught Negro slaves to speak Gaelic!

Lowland Scots are, on the other hand, more difficult to trace after their arrival in the New World. They were not clannish in

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Graham, Colonists, 108.

Originally mentioned in James Cameron, The Old and New Highlands and Hebrides (Kirkcaldy, 1912), cited in G. Shepperson. "Writings in Scottish-American history: a brief survey", William & Mary Quarterly, 3rd ser., xi (1954), 169.

the senses of grouping together or of wearing distinctive garb or of speaking a foreign language: like the Englishman, the Lowlander potentially could blend into the American scene. Occasionally this was taken rather to an extreme, since many present-day Cherokees trace their Scottish surnames to the frequent contact, apparently close contact, between South Carolina Lowlanders and the Cherokee tribe. Still, the increasing numbers of Lowlanders tended to retain their sense of Scottish nationality, and St Andrew's Societies were founded in profusion during the half-century before Independence (the earliest being that established at Charles Town, South Carolina, in 1729). Perhaps just because the Lowlander immigrant tended to come as an individual he needed such a consciously contrived organisation by which he could maintain some of his identity.

With that brief introduction, we may now turn to religious influence, that aspect of Scots-American colonial history which has most often been ignored or distorted by historians. For nearly 30 years Leonard Trinterud's book, *The Forming of an American Tradition*, has served as the definitive view of the formative period in colonial presbyterianism. For Trinterud the American Presbyterian Church "was not, as has been asserted so often, largely a Scottish and Scotch-Irish Church patterned closely after the Scottish model"; but the present writer has argued elsewhere against this, believing that the traditional view, that the Church of Scotland was American Presbyterianism's basic blueprint, is much closer to the truth than Trinterud allows. More recently, Andrew Hook in his Scotland and America 1750-1835 adopts the same view but without tackling Trinterud head-on.

It is true, of course, that the Church of Scotland never exercised through any of its courts direct control over the life and work of American presbyterianism — but did direct control ensure that a colonial church would be a carbon copy of the "Mother Church"? One has only to look at the Anglican church in Virginia at the end of the colonial period to see how much farther it veered from the Church of England than had the Presbyterian Church in America veered from the Church of Scotland. It has been the genius of presbyterian mission, from

One of the most notable Indians during the latter part of the eighteenth century was Alexander McGillivray, who came to President Washington in the 1790s and received \$100,000 from the new Federal American Government for damages claimed by the Creek Indians against the Americans during the War of Independence.

L. J. Trinterud, The Forming of an American Tradition (Philadelphia, 1949), 32. This is hardly a "recent study", as Andrew Hook states in his Scotland and America, 1750-1835 (Glasgow, 1975).

See B. S. Schlenther. The Life and Writings of Francis Makemie (Philadelphia, 1971).

Hook, Scotland and America, 26.

Geneva onwards, to attempt to nurture indigenous control within its missions, and nowhere has this been better shown than in colonial America: American presbyterianism was the only religious body during the entire colonial period to have an indigenous, intercolonial church structure; in fact, it was the only

indigenous intercolonial structure of any kind.

Formed in 1706, under the tutelage of Francis Makemie, a graduate of Glasgow, and all but coincidental with the Act of Union, the infant Presbyterian Church gained from the free movement into the colonies of energetic North Britons who were to shape its destiny. The 1699 ruling on Scottish office-holders opened the way into the Middle Colonies for Scottish and Ulster-Scot ministers, into New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania — the very areas which were to be the cutting-edge of colonial

growth throughout the eighteenth century.

The new Presbyterian Church in America attempted indeed to have it both ways, claiming rights as a dissenting church on the one hand whilst on the other pleading establishment on the basis of the established Church of Scotland. It is clear that the Scottish connection was an important one. Thus, Samuel Davies, the great presbyterian leader in Virginia at mid-century, wrote to the Bishop of London, before Davies had ever set foot in Britain: "If I am prejudiced in favour of any church, my lord, it is of that established in Scotland; of which I am a member in the same sense that the Established Church in Virginia is the Church of England."13 When Davies later went to Scotland, on behalf of the American Synod, to secure subscriptions for the new College of New Jersey (i.e. Princeton, of which he was later to become President), he told the General Assembly: We are part of yourselves, "having adopted the same standard of doctrine, worship, and government with this church".14

Although the Church of Scotland did not exercise direct ecclesiastical control over her infant daughter church, the Scottish contribution in money and men to American presbyterianism was substantial. Perhaps the most notable, early event in this connection was the founding in 1709 of the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge, for by 1730 the S.S.P.C.K. had become deeply concerned about the spiritual condition of the native American Indian and provided the most significant impetus for mission work amongst the American Indians during the entire colonial period. The most remarkable individual who came to prominence in America through the work of the S.S.P.C.K. was

W. H. Foote, Sketches of Virginia, 1st ser. (Philadelphia, 1850), 202-3; the full text is printed on pp. 180-206.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 261 (Davies's Journal).

See C. A. Briggs, American Presbyterianism (Edinburgh, 1885), 297-303, and Scots Magazine, ix (1747), 145.

Samson Occom, a native of the Mohegan tribe, ordained by the Presbytery of Suffolk on Long Island in 1759. Two years later Occom was recommended to the Society, which then supported him as missionary to the Oneida Indians in up-colony New York. In 1766 Occom came to Britain to solicit funds for the enlargement and support of an Indian school (soon to become Dartmouth College), and as the first Red Indian minister ever to have appeared in Great Britain he excited no small interest. He preached three or four hundred times in England and Scotland and collected the incredible sum of £10,000 in the currency of the day, at least £2,000 of which was raised by the Society in Scotland: and the Church of Scotland in its own name also raised donations for the school.<sup>16</sup>

One of the most important sources for Scottish-American ecclesiastical contact during the eighteenth century is the collection of Robert Wodrow Letters in the National Library.<sup>17</sup> Some of his more important correspondence was with America, and especially with Cotton Mather of Boston, with whom he corresponded over 20 years; there was a frequent flow of books, as well as letters, between the two men. Cotton, whose opinions were then moving steadily towards presbyterianism and away from the older rigid congregationalism of his father, Increase Mather, could hardly constrain his praise of the Church of Scotland, which he judged "the best thing our poor earth has to show".<sup>18</sup> He wrote also to Wodrow that "the Church of Scotland has Appeared unto me as the most illustrious that is to be seen upon the face of the earth", <sup>19</sup> and in 1718 claimed "I have observed a singular wisdom in the Church of Scotland above any living."<sup>20</sup>

Cotton Mather was caught between his desire for more presbyterianism in Massachusetts and his father's intransigence on the subject. His father had been particularly upset by the activities of Benjamin Colman, pastor of the Brattle Street Church in Boston from 1699, who had refused to be ordained in New England but had received that ordinance at the hands of the London Presbyterians and then returned to Boston to be a thorn in the older Mather's flesh. It was Colman who wrote to Scotland

Briggs, 324-5. Oddly, Hook fails to take notice of Occom. For Anglican letters critical of the Society in America, see W. S. Perry (ed.), *Historical Collections relating to the American Colonial Church*, III: Massachusetts (Hartford, 1873), 484, 498. For the activities of the Society in providing funds for Church of Scotland ministers to go out to the American colonies, see Briggs, 292-3, 329.

Unfortunately, none of the letters in the last bound volume, xxiii, were printed in the Wodrow Society's three-volume edition of the letters. There is a number of valuable letters in this volume, relating to the American colonies, viz. 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122[b], 123, 123bB, 124.

William & Mary Quarterly, 3rd ser., xi (1954), 465.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> National Library of Scotland, Wodrow Letters, xx, no. 16.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 15.

(probably to Wodrow) in 1720, and mentioned a great deal of disorder in regard to the settlement and dismissal of pastors in New England:

All this disorder is owing to ye want of Presbyterian authority & Jurisdiction among us . . . [What we have] is too weak a bottom; for when they wil[l] both Ministers & people will be Independent.<sup>21</sup>

In the same vein, he wrote in 1725 to Wodrow that "I fully agree with you that our Congregational Bottom is narrow & unreasonable. . . ." There was thus a basic cleavage between Colman and most of the other ministers of Massachusetts, especially the older ones led by Increase Mather who obviously found the local congregationalist bottom wide enough to support their churchmanship. But Colman was thorough-going in his presbyterianism which makes nonsense of Trinterud's claim that, since Colman was a great friend and correspondent with leading presbyterians in the Synod, the Synod was being nudged towards congregationalism through Colman's influence.

In fact, there is much documentary evidence, primarily from the records of eighteenth-century American presbyteries and to undercut Trinterud's claim that presbyterianism, consciously and unconsciously, owed more in its and development to New England Puritan congregationalism than to Old World models. By 1770 the leadership of the American Presbyterian Church was dominated almost completely by men of immediate Ulster Scots and Scottish extraction. American churchmen would, of course, draw from their present American experience, but the church as a whole had maintained and continued to maintain a definite criterion for its church government and life. Thus in 1769 an American synodical letter was addressed to the Church of Scotland, explaining that after determining to communicate with overseas churches it was found most "natural for them first to turn their eyes to the Church of Scotland, to which they are of all other the most entirely conformed, and, from which indeed they may be said to have derived their origin". The Synod then continued:

Many or most of the first Presbyterian Ministers in this Country had their education in Scotland, and formed their infant Societys on the model of your most excellent Constitution; and now, that the body has become more

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 25.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, xxi, no. 54.

considerable, we continue steadily attached to the same principles... and the laws and practice of the Church of Scotland have Chief Authority with us in point of Government.<sup>23</sup>

The letter then goes on to plead for more Scottish ministers to come to America.

This strong Scottish connection is reaffirmed in other documents. Thus on the eve of the formation of its own General Assembly, in 1789, the American church was carrying on conversations with the Dutch Reformed Church in America, to whom it explained that

The rules of our discipline and the form of process in our church judicatures, are contained in Pardovan's (alias Stewart's) collections. . . Our church judicatures, like those in the church of Scotland, from which we derive our origin, are Church Sessions, Presbyteries, and Synods, to which it is now in contemplation to add a National and General Assembly.<sup>24</sup>

To this we can add a number of similar references to the Church of Scotland in the minutes of the American presbyteries, from the statement that a minister was being inducted into his charge "after the form of the Church of Scotland"25 to an entire presbytery drawing up "a Declaration of our adherence to the Standards of the Church of Scotland".26 From these and many other considerations,27 it is clear that American presbyterianism during the eighteenth century, from the formation of the first presbytery in 1706 to the establishment of a General Assembly in 1789. followed the Westminster form with its Scottish applications. The norms were followed very closely, but not slavishly. Adaptations were made for the American situation (just as the Church of Scotland had made certain adaptations in the Westminster standards for the Scottish situation); but the basic principles, and many details, of Scottish presbyterianism were adhered to without variation.

Other Scottish influences upon American presbyterianism were of a different ilk. Alexander Craighead, whose family came to America from Scotland by way of Ulster, insisted in 1743 that the

Records of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (hereafter Records) (Philadelphia, 1841), 397. For the Assembly's response, see Briggs, cxx-ii.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> Records, 519.

MS minutes of the Presbytery of New Castle, iii, 220.

MS minutes of the Presbytery of Hanover, ii. 22.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> See the present writer's unpublished Ph.D. dissertation (University of Edinburgh, 1965), "The Presbytery as Organ of Church Life and Government in American Presbyterianism, 1706-1788".

American Presbyterian Church renew the Scottish National Covenant and Solemn League and Covenant. When his presbytery declared these views to be full of "treason, sedition and distraction", he withdrew from the Church and led his congregation at Middle Octorara, Pennsylvania, in a dramatic renewal of the covenants, with swords drawn and pointed to the four winds:

The Covenants were renewed by solemn Swearing to them, with an up-lifted Hand to Almighty God: During the Time of reading the Testimony, and Renewal of the Covenants, the Sword was drawn. . . .

The Declaration, Protestation, and Testimony of a suffering Remnant of the Anti-Popish, Anti-Lutheran, Anti-Prelatick, Anti-Erastian, Anti-Latitudinarian, Anti-Sectarian, true Presbyterian Church of Christ, in America.

... 9thly, We do likewise enter our Testimony against George the I, his having any legal Right to rule over this Realm, because he being an outlandish Lutherian; and likewise against George the II, for their being sworn Prelaticks, the Head of Malignants, and Protectors of Sectarian Hereticks.<sup>28</sup>

The covenanters then cursed the American Presbyterian Church and its apostacy, "which appears from their almost boundless Terms of Church Communion". Such an extreme covenanter position was unthinkable to the main body of American presbyterianism (as well, of course, as to Scottish presbyterians) at mid-eighteenth century. But Craighead's small group carried on, and in 1774 its first presbytery in America was formed under the Reformed Presbytery of Scotland.<sup>29</sup>

But it would be seriously misleading to omit one further Scottish contribution to colonial American religion — one not presbyterianism in any of its forms. For it is a curious fact that Scottish Episcopacy continued throughout the colonial American period to pop up in strange and unexpected places. The first event, or non-event as it turned out, was an early proposal to establish an American episcopal see — of no little importance since the political to-ings and fro-ings in the period before Independence are often so closely linked to this question that recent historians have concluded that it was considered to be so threatening (especially to colonial congregationalists and presbyterians) that it was a major cause for the outbreak of rebellion.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> Printed in Journal of Presbyterian History, lii (1974), 315-16.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> L. J. Trinterud (comp.), Bibliography of Colonial American Presbyterianism (Philadelphia, 1968), sect. ix.

See, for example, C. Bridenbaugh, Mitre and Septre (New York, 1962); also Trinterud, The Forming, chap. 13.

Be that as it may, about the year 1670 the Reverend Alexander Moray (or Murray), a Scot, was proposed to the Bishop of London, who nominally held responsibility for the Anglican religious life of the colonies, as a likely candidate to become Bishop of Virginia (the only colony at the time that had a clear Anglican Establishment): but this mysterious man, Moray, disappears from history in 1672.31 Then, in December 1689, James Blair, 32 a clergyman of the Church of Scotland in its Stewart episcopal dispensation, was appointed by the Bishop of London as his first "commissary" in Virginia. Blair, a graduate of Aberdeen, had settled in Virginia four years before he was appointed commissary, and in 1693 he was appointed, in addition, as the first President of the new College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, the capital of Virginia. For nearly half a century Blair guided the destiny of church and college in Virginia, most of the time making himself thoroughly unpopular with the majority of Virginian leaders: and one reason for this unpopularity is of especial interest to us. At the Revolution of 1689-90 many episcopally ordained Scots turned tail and set sail for the New World, and were naturally attracted to Virginia, with its Anglican establishment and with many more parishes than it had pastors. With parishes to fill, a Scottish supremo at the helm of the Virginian Church, and Scottish episcopalians ready to hand, the result was predictable.

A young English clergyman wrote thus to the Bishop of

Lichfield and Coventry in 1697:

I don't like this Country at all, my Lord, there are so many inconveniencies in it with which I cannot well agree. Your clergy in these parts are of a very ill example, no discipline nor Canons of the Church are observed. This Clergy is composed for the most part of Scotchmen, people indeed so basely educated and so little acquainted with the excellency of their charge and duty, that their lives and conversation are fitter to make Heathens than Christians. Several Ministers have caused such high scandals of late and have raised such prejudices amongst the people against the Clergy, that hardly they can be persuaded to take a minister in their parish. As to me, my Lord, I have got in the very worst parish of Virginia and most troublesome. . . . Though the whole country of Virginia hath a great respect for my Lord Bishop of London, they do resent a high affront made to their nation, because his Lordship has sent here Mr Blair a Scotchman, to be

For a discussion of Moray see G. Brydon, Virginia's Mother Church (Richmond, 1947), i. 183-4.

For a full-length biography see P. Rouse, Jun., James Blair of Virginia (Chapel Hill, 1971).

commissary, a counsellor, and President of the College. I was once in a great company of Gentlemen, some of them were Counsellors, and they did ask me, "Don't you think there may be in England amongst the English, a clergyman fit to be Commissary and Counsellor and President of our College?" 33

Things got so serious at one point that a conference was held at Lambeth, with the Archbishop of Canterbury presiding, joined by the Bishop of London and several men from Virginia, Blair among them. One of the basic charges then stated against Blair was "that he has filled the Church and the College with Scotchmen and endeavored to make a national faction by the name of the Scottish party", and a Virginian hostile to him described the Scottish clergy in Virginia as making "a great noise in the Country" and as "a sort of discontented troublesome Men murmuring at the shortness of their salaries with which the Ministers were very well contented formerly . . .". 34 In 1700 the Governor of Virginia, Francis Nicholson, always at daggers-drawn with Blair, wrote to the Archbishop of Canterbury that

Here are vacancies for 6 or 8 clergymen, but the country at present seems to be averse to any more Scotch... about the Scotch Clergymen... when such things once take [place] in these parts of the world, they are not easily worn out.<sup>35</sup>

And in 1703, an American correspondent of the Bishop of London remarked that some were asking:

What, can't an English church & clergy under an English Established Governmt be governed without a Scotch Comissry being set over them; this is worse than Dutch & French officers over an English army, can't our universities & the whole Kingdom afford an English man qualified to preside over our Clergy without being forced to send a Scotch man . . . must those yt never were true sons of the church become rulers & almost Fathers of it. . . . Others do heartily wish & pray that your Lordship may not send any more Scotch clergy amongst them. . . . 36

Bitter anti-Scottish sentiment in the colonies was never put more

forcefully than during the tenure of the Rev. James Blair.

The final irony of the struggle of the Church of England for an American bishop came only after American Independence had been won. In 1784 an American Anglican minister, Samuel

Perry, Historical Collections, I: Virginia (Hartford, 1870), 30-1.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

Seabury, Jun., travelled to England with letters from the clergy of Connecticut and New York, asking that he be consecrated the first American bishop. But Canterbury hesitated and finally refused, fearing to offend the new American nation. Seabury turned to the non-juring bishops of Scotland, who had no such hesitation; and in November 1784 in the house of John Skinner of Aberdeen, with Bishops Skinner and Kilgour as consecrators, Seabury became a bishop. It was a secret consecration but, then, the Scottish bishops had had experience with such things. Many American non-Anglicans were offended by the action, and yet

another arrow was added to the anti-Scottish quiver.

When we turn to the broader Scottish cultural contributions to colonial American life, it is clear that the Common Sense philosophy had a tremendous appeal to an eighteenth-century America which was increasingly concerned with "how to do it". And perhaps the most significant Scottish export to America during the period was John Witherspoon, primarily due to his being the on-the-colonial-spot presenter and interpreter of the Common Sense philosophy. There is no doubt whatsoever that, as President of Princeton from 1768 to his death in 1794, he exercised the most formidable influence upon American theology and higher education during the last half of the eighteenth century. Witherspoon's main philosophical concern was to show that the ideas of Enlightenment thought could be made fully compatible with his orthodox Calvinism. One might almost be tempted to coin the term "Common Sense Calvinism" as his motto. Witherspoon's rehabilitation of the Calvinist tradition, when it was under extreme Enlightenment pressure, certainly accounted for its survival as a respected intellectual option in American thought. Indeed, the contribution of Scottish academic thought upon eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century America was immense. The Common Sense philosophy was just what the doctor (Witherspoon) ordered for American needs. Yet there was a strange contrast here between Scotland and America: during the eighteenth century, while America was moving naturally, almost inevitably, towards independence, Scotland seems to have moved towards assimilation with the English. It was, for instance, the mark of the educated Scotsman to emulate London standards in the use of the English language. Now it is true that Witherspoon in America thought the same way. With his emphasis on rhetoric and form he thought that it was imperative for the new American nation to be up to snuff also; and he wrote in 1781 that "the word Americanism, which I have coined . . . is exactly similar in its formation and signification to the word Scotticism".37 But within two or three years of that statement, Noah Webster was

J. Clive and B. Bailyn, "England's cultural provinces: Scotland and America". William & Mary Quarterly, 3rd ser., xi (1954), 210-11.

actively publishing grammatical textbooks, whose main purpose was to produce an Americanised English, in spelling and pronunciation — with a desire for simplification, a utilitarian purpose designed to fit the unique American circumstances. This quickly carried the day. Witherspoon fell into line, intentionally or not, and began to coin other new terms to fit the American world. Thus, when we use the word "campus" today, it is not a spoonerism but a Witherspoonerism that we utter! Scotland consciously continued to look to London as the arbiter of good letters; the Americans thought they could do it on their own, part and parcel of their new independence.

In trading matters too, after 1707, Scottish influence was strong. Legally now, Scottish merchants began to capture a large slice of Virginian trade — not least because Virginia and Maryland, in particular, had left themselves wide open to the initiative of outsiders by refusing to develop towns and communities.<sup>38</sup> This meant that almost all corporate life — social, educational, religious — centred on the plantation; and, lacking a commercial middle class of merchants, bankers and traders that would have been provided by towns, the Virginian and other southern plantation owners needed middle-men who would handle all the red tape of trade and finance with the mother country. Into this commercial void moved the lowland Scots naturally, began to steer more and more of the tobacco to the north of Britain. The London merchants thus began to lose a great deal of business and many of them voiced strong feelings about the weakened position of the English nation since that dreadful Act of Union of 1707! By 1769 Glasgow had become the first tobacco port in the British Isles39 and, in the five years before 1776, more than two dozen Glasgow firms were operating stores in Virginia and Maryland. By 1772, indeed, tobacco accounted for 80 per cent of all Scottish imports from North America: if Virginia was a colony "built on smoke", verily Glasgow became a city built on smoke — one can even say that Glasgow became the commercial town that Virginia lacked. In Virginia, and in all the Chesapeake Bay colonies, there now were Scottish lowland-born merchants in all the coastal towns and they, in turn, usually imported their own clerks and storekeepers from Scotland.

Especially in the decade before Independence the Scots became increasingly unpopular (exacerbating the earlier animosity shown towards them by Virginians in church and higher

For a contemporary's criticism of the plantation system, see F. Makemie, A Plain and Friendly Perswasive to the Inhabitants of Virginia, etc. (1705), printed in B. Schlenther, 135-52.

Graham, Colonists, 118. For a general discussion, see J. M. Price, "The Rise of Glasgow in the Chesapeake Tobacco Trade, 1707-1775", William and Mary Quarterly, 3rd ser., xi (1954), 179-99.

education): Graham calls them the "money-changers in the temple of American liberty".<sup>40</sup> In 1773, a group of inhabitants of Bedford County, Virginia, published a broadside, which leaves no room for doubt as to their sentiments towards the North Britons:

The Scotch Nation about fifty years ago, being informed of this valuable Country, and of the weak and blind Side of its Inhabitants, chose, some of them, to quit their Packs, and leave their poor Fare, and Barren Country, and make an Experiment in the Tobacco Trade; which, by a little Industry, and the mechanick Turn of Mind and the artful Craftiness and Cunning natural to that Nation, they soon not only raised great Estates for themselves, but found a plan to enrich their Country, and raise Glasgow, from being a poor, small, petty Port, to one of the richest Towns and trading Ports in his Majesty's Dominions, and all by Fawning, Flattery, and outwitting the indolent and thoughtless Planters.<sup>41</sup>

## And a correspondent to the Virginia Gazette warned

Let us BEDFORDMEN lead the Van to Liberty and Renown, and turn the Channel from centring in Glasgow (richly overflowing all Scotland, and aggrandising all Scotchmen) to centre in Virginia; which may be done very easily by dealing with none that don't choose to reside here and spend their Riches here, instead of in Glasgow

and then, admitting that there might be a few American traders and tradesmen who charged extortionate prices, claimed that this was only because they had "imbibed Scotch Principles".42

The following year, in 1774, James Gilchrist wrote to a correspondent that he had recently come across a man who was "carrying about a paper for expelling out the country all Scotchmen, to which he had got 300 names". However, Gilchrist goes on, "for his ill-bred invections against that country in general & against some individuals in particular, the Parson of the Parish (one Cameron from the Highlands) followed him & gave him a good & most complete caning". 43

And on 20th October 1774 the Virginia Gazette contained this observation on "Scotch Impudence":

A Scotchman, when he first is admitted into a house, is so humble that he will sit upon the lowest step of the staircase. By degrees he gets into the kitchen, and from thence, by the most submissive behaviour, is advanced to

<sup>40</sup> Graham, Colonists, 163.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 164.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 165.

<sup>43</sup> Printed in William & Mary Quarterly, 3rd ser., xi (1954), 291.

the parlour. If he gets into the diningroom, as ten to one but he will, the master of the house must take care of himself: for in all probability he will turn him out of doors, and, by the assistance of his *countrymen*, keep possession forever.<sup>44</sup>

At the beginning of the American War for Independence in 1776 commercial ties with Scotland were immediately severed but, fortunately for many Scots traders, Canada had recently (1763) been removed from French influence and, therefore, they were able to apply their "little Industry", the "mechanick Turn of Mind and the artful Craftiness and Cunning natural to that Nation" to the development of Canada. But, before that turn of events, during the American War of Independence, the complex question of Scottish loyalty to the Crown was raised. It is no surprise that the large majority of native-born Scots in America did not support separation from the mother country. George III's attachment to the Earl of Bute, and to Scotsmen, was a consideration here. Indeed, long after Bute's fall, the myth of Scots' intrigue and power at court continued to keep the anti-Scots pulse beating and many Americans shared these feelings. "Your king," wrote a Boston correspondent to a friend in London in 1775, "seems to be infatuated with a parcel of Scotchmen and Jacobites."45 It is clear that the overwhelmingly protestant American colonies had been alarmed, 20 or 30 years earlier, by the Stewarts' attempt to recover the crown and had been openly delighted at the news of Cumberland's victory at Culloden. Colonial sermons had been preached which indicate that there was a very simplistic identification in the American mind of things Scottish with popish pretenders. All this came to life again: was not, after all, Bute's family name Stuart?46 This grave American distrust of the Scots in British government, coupled with the mercantile success of Scots in America, produced a bitter ethnic hatred. We have seen how the wrath of the natives, especially in the tobacco colonies just before the Revolution, pointed to the Scots in particular, as those who were helping American coin to emigrate to British purses.

Moreover, the Scots, very many of them at least, really were outsiders and had no zeal to become Americans. The lowlander shopkeepers and merchants especially did not look upon America as their permanent home, often regarding their presence in America as a short-term, money-making enterprise. They certainly had no desire to see devolution from London to

Ibid.

M. W. Willard (ed.), Letters on the American Revolution, 1774-1776 (Boston, 1925), 143.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>46</sup> For a detailed discussion of anti-Scottish sentiment in the colonies, see Hook, Scotland and America, chap. 3.

Philadelphia. It is hardly surprising that, as the drum of war began to beat, most of these Scots would earn the further illopinion of the Americans: they lacked revolutionary fervour, more often they were boldly Loyalist. 1775 produced a crisis in Virginia, when in November the Royal Governor of the province entered Norfolk and administered the oath of allegiance to the Scots merchants and their clerks, forming them into the "Queen's Own Loyal Virginians" who were then driven out of Norfolk the following month by American patriot inhabitants.

And what of the Highlanders and the War of Independence? The bulk of Highlanders in America on the eve of hostilities had come to the New World only within the previous five or six years. This was true both in North Carolina and in New York. Emigration from Scotland was prohibited in 1775 by order of the Lord Advocate, to maintain recruitment of Highlanders into the British army and to offset the fear that they would join the rebellious colonists. But this fear was absolutely ill-founded. American Independence ideals certainly would not appeal to Highland tacksmen, hoping to build a new quasi-feudal society in the colonies. Documents relating to the war abound, indeed, with official references to Highlanders ready and willing to fight for King and Empire. This letter of April 1775 from the Earl of Dartmouth to General Thomas Gage is typical: "Lieutenant-Colonel Allan Macleane . . . has made proposals for engaging the many emigrants from the northwest parts of North Britain now resident chiefly in New York and North Carolina in such association to support the authority of this kingdom. . . Somewhat optimistically, the Royal Governor of North Carolina wrote to Dartmouth in June of the same year: "I could . . . maintain the sovereignty of this province to His Majesty with the power I could collect immediately among the emigrants from the Highlands of Scotland who are settled here and immovably attached to His Majesty and his government. . . . I am assured by From all this it should not be shocking to learn that one of the most common American revolutionary toasts was: exportation to Scotchmen and Tories."50

During the war itself several colonies (now states) began to ensure that when the hostilities were over certain people would

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>47</sup> Graham, Colonists, 169. See also A. M. Schlesinger, The Colonial Merchants and the American Revolution (New York, 1918).

Documents of the American Revolution, 1770-1783 (Colonial Office Ser.), vol. ix (Transcripts), no. xlvi.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>49</sup> Ibid., no. civ. See also vol. vii (Calendar), nos. 350, 1018, 1036, 1062, 1070, 1070i, 1090, 1290i, 1326. In New England the Royal Governor of Massachusetts, Hutchinson, wrote that the Scots in Boston "were almost without exception good subjects" (Hook, 50).

<sup>50</sup> Hook. Scotland and America, 51.

not return. A 1777 law, passed in North Carolina, stated that all persons who had "traded directly to Great Britain or Ireland" were to take an oath of allegiance to the government of the American patriots or leave immediately. Most of those who left because of this law were Scots, and in October of that year the North Carolina Gazette reported that "great numbers of these infatuated and over-loyal People returned from America to their own Country". Among these "over-loyal People" was Flora MacDonald — after only a very brief American sojourn: her relative, Donald MacDonald, was a commissioned general in the service of the king and her husband, Allan, was a captain in the same force. 52

In August 1782, as hostilities were drawing to a close, the Georgia House of Assembly made clear its particular distrust of the Scots, in an act that declared that "the People of Scotland have in General Manifested a decided inimicality to the Civil Liberties of America and have contributed Principally to promote and Continue a Ruinous War, for the Purpose of Subjugating this and the other . . . States". The law forbade any native of Scotland to enter Georgia with intent to settle or to carry on any trade, profession or business. Any Scottish native discovered in Georgia was to be imprisoned without bail and deported as soon as possible. The only Scots excepted were those who openly had supported the American position. The conservatism of the great majority of the Scots in the colonies, coupled with the envy inspired by their commercial success and political power, exposed them to mounting unpopularity and abuse from the majority of Americans.

It is in the religious side of the loyalty question that historians have most often gone wrong. As Andrew Hook says, the argument has been that "Presbyterians as a group were ardent patriots, the Scots were Presbyterians, therefore all Scots must have been patriots". And lest one countered that most of the Scots, especially the Highlanders, were not presbyterians, that (it was said) simply was not the case: as Graham writes, "With the exception of a few Highlanders [Roman Catholics] and Aberdonians [Episcopalians] all the Scots in America were Presbyterians." 55

The puzzle here is again resolved by keeping clear the distinction between Scots and Ulster Scots. In most people's minds the Scots have become submerged in the vastly greater number of Ulstermen in America — and the Ulster Scots, almost

<sup>51</sup> Graham, Colonists, 156-7.

Printed in Journal of Presbyterian History, lii (1974), 428.

Graham, Colonists, 153.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>54</sup> Hook, Scotland and America, 49.

Graham, Colonists, 180.

to a man, were on the American side. The turning-point in the Southern campaign during the war was the Battle of King's Mountain in 1780; it was, essentially, a battle between an army of Highland Scots in North Carolina and a force of Ulster Scots. All, on both sides, were overwhelmingly presbyterian: and nothing perhaps, better illustrates the divergent roles of Highland Scot and Ulster Scot in the American Revolution.

The presbyterians who were Loyalists were mainly Scots who remained Scots in the New World. They never had become Americans; certainly there had not been enough time for most of them. They were clannish; and they lived on the perimeter of colonial life, culturally and geographically, North Carolina and northern New York; or they were a class apart, like the Lowlander Chesapeake merchants. Or to put it another way: the vast majority of presbyterians in America were not Scots; and the vast majority of presbyterians were already Americans — "Americanised", if you will, and therefore in the vanguard of Independence. It is absolutely essential that we not include Scots in the general statements made regarding American presbyterian support for Independence.

The confusion, it should be said, started early on in the struggle. In 1764 an anonymous author published in Philadelphia A LOOKING-GLASS FOR PRESBYTERIANS or A brief Examination of their Loyalty, Merit, etc..., in the wake of the dreadful "Paxton Boys" massacre of innocent Indians; and the Paxton Boys were presbyterians — but Ulster presbyterians — to a man. Yet no such distinctions were to be made by the author, who was certain that he saw in the presbyterians of Paxton a spirit of freedom which bordered on rebellion against the king (no doubt a valid insight). But who gets the blame?

What KING has ever reign'd in *Great Britain*, whose Government has not been disturb'd with *Presbyterian Rebellions*, since ever they were a People? Will they not be answerable for all the innocent Blood spilt at *Pentland Hills* and *Bothel Bridge*? From when could they have possibly learn'd, but from *Mahomet*, to propagate the[i]r Religion with the Sword . . . to march an Army into *England*, with a view to extirpate or butcher all those of the *English* Nation, who would not join them in the Worship of their own great Goddess, the *Presbytery*, which they had set up in their own Country?<sup>56</sup>

Governor Martin of New York could write to Dartmouth in 1774: "Long standing differences between Church of England and

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>56</sup> Printed in Journal of Presbyterian History, lii (1974), 333-34.

Presbyterians are political as well as religious: members of former

are loyal but Presbyterians are unfriendly to monarchy."57

To add to our historical woes the name "presbyterian" very often was used at this time, especially by those in Britain, to describe the entire congregational/presbyterian ethos in America. At times the war was referred to in Parliament simply as a "presbyterian rebellion". Therefore, it is particularly misleading to equate presbyterian with Scottish in this context.58 Logical identification of parties and denominations and ethnic loyalties must have been made completely haphazard when America's leading Scotsman became one of the leading supporters of Independence and Horace Walpole proclaimed in the Commons: "There is no good crying about the matter. America has run off with a Presbyterian parson, and that is the end of it."59 This was none other than Parson Witherspoon, of course, and it probably is most due to his advocacy of Independence that those Americans who now flock to Edinburgh and St Andrews have a deeply romantic view of Scotland as the land of liberty, imagining that such Scots as there were in the colonies were most responsible for bringing about American Independence.

In fact, Witherspoon was in an uncomfortable position, to say the least. When Thomas Jefferson penned his first draft of the Declaration of Independence, it said that one reason the colonies were opting for independence was that the English were sending to America "not only soldiers of our common blood, but Scotch and foreign mercenaries to invade and destroy us".60 Witherspoon persuaded Congress to delete the offending words from the Declaration, attempting almost single-handedly to work for better Scots-American relations. Feeling the constant sting of the odium against Scots, Witherspoon published a remarkable pamphlet in 1777 called An Address to the Natives of Scotland residing in America, in which he noted that "It has given me no little uneasiness, to hear the word Scotch used as a term of reproach in the American controversy." He went on to claim that there were many Scots in America who opposed the British government, but added that he was willing to grant that "in some provinces especially, the natives of Scotland have been too much inclined to support the usurpations of the parent state . . . ". Just in case that was so, he then tried to bring his fellow-Scots to see the revolutionary light.61 This pamphlet, indeed, reads very like

Documents of the American Revolution, vol. vii (Calendar), no. 718. See also vol. ix (Transcripts), no. xxxix.

This is something of which Dr Hook is, alas, apparently guilty — see Scotland and America, 66-7.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>59</sup> G. Slosser (ed.), They Seek a Country (New York, 1955), 155.

<sup>60</sup> Graham, Colonists, 152.

J. Witherspoon, An address, etc. (London, 1778), 2-3.

another, a formal letter of 1775 entitled An Address of the Presbyterian Ministers of the City of Philadelphia to the Ministers and Presbyterian Congregations in . . . North Carolina; 62 and obviously church leaders in the middle colonies were very concerned about the loyalism of the Scots presbyterians, especially in the southern colony of North Carolina. The Philadelphia pastors argued that they were neither disloyal to the king, nor did they have any intention of setting up governments independent of Great Britain: but they did not want to be "slaves" — a favourite rallying-word of the time.

Poor John Witherspoon, distrusted by many of his fellow-patriots because of his "Scotchness", tried so hard to prove his American manhood, so to speak, that he became one of the most visible advocates of Independence and an excellent target for Tories. Men like Ezra Stiles, President of Yale (American to the bone, and perhaps just a trifle jealous of Witherspoon's obvious successes at Princeton), scoffed at Witherspoon's appeal to American Scots: "Too much Scoticism!" thundered Stiles, "he wants to save his Countrymen, who have behaved most cruelly in this American conflict." Several months later, Stiles wrote in his diary:

The Policy of Scotland & all the governmental Ideas of the Body of that People, are abhorrent to all Ideas of civil Liberty & are full of rigorous tyrannical Superiorities & subordinations. But Dr With[erspoon] goes all lengths with Congress. . . . We . . . scorn to be awed by him into an ignominious Silence on the subject of Scots Perfidy & Tyranny and Enmity to America. Let us boldly say, for History will say it, that the whole of this War is so far chargeable to the Scotch Council & to the Scotch as a Nation . . . as that had it not been for them, this Quarrel had never happened. 65

Only two Scots signed the Declaration of Independence: Witherspoon (the only clergyman to do so) and John Wilson, a native of St Andrews, who studied there as well as at Glasgow and Edinburgh before arriving in America just three years before Witherspoon. But Wilson was not the best advertisement for Witherspoon's rehabilitation of the Scots, since he long held out against independence and was finally persuaded to sign the Declaration only and literally at the eleventh hour, on the night of the 3rd of July!

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>62</sup> W. L. Saunders (ed.), *The Colonial Records of North Carolina* (Raleigh, 1890), vol. x, 222-28.

An American Tory poet penned the line in 1780, "I'd rather be a dog than Witherspoon . . .": see Journal of Presbyterian History, lii (1974), 432-3.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>64</sup> E. Stiles, Literary Diary (New York, 1901), ii, 41.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 184-5.

In his recent study, Dr Hook suggests that "Jefferson's indictment of the Scots is peculiarly ironic in the light . . . of the fact that Jefferson's framing of the Declaration owes a major debt to the Elements of Logick of William Duncan . . . ";66 he also could have gone on to point out Jefferson's almost emabarrassing praise for the University of Edinburgh and all its works. Why there is any irony is difficult to see. It is clear that American Enlightenment and political leaders (who were one and the same, witness Jefferson) loved the Scottish mind — but could not bear the Scots! Or, to put it more delicately, that the Scottish intellectual leaders in America such as Witherspoon were very different creatures from Scottish merchants and traders in Virginia and the politically reactionary Highlanders of North Carolina and New York. There is no irony in Jefferson's admiring the one and anathematising the other. In 1774 one royal governor observed astutely that in the matter of loyalty to the Crown "I am inclined to think the people of . . . [the presbyterian] denomination in general throughout the [American] continent are not of the principles of the Church of Scotland."67

Some Americans looked to the Church of Scotland for possible support in the War of Independence; and in 1771<sup>68</sup> the American Synod wrote an official letter to the General Assembly, directing Witherspoon to "transmit the letter" to the Kirk. Some other

matters are touched on but quickly we come to the nub:

We beg leave to mention our expectation, that manifesting and maintaining our connection with the church of Scotland, may be the means of securing our constitutional privileges, especially our religious liberties [the old appeal to the Scottish religious Establishment]....<sup>69</sup>

At the General Assembly in Edinburgh on 28th May 1772 it is minuted: "A letter produced from the moderator of the Synod of New York [and Philadelphia], read, and the Assembly continued the committee of correspondents appointed by the last Assembly, and ordered the said letter to be given to them." But there does not appear to have been an official reply to the American letter: the Kirk was not prepared to emit what could easily have been construed as traitorous noises.

Yet there was some rather sharp division in the Church of Scotland over the War of Independence.<sup>71</sup> Basically, the

<sup>66</sup> Hook, Scotland and America, 71 N. 20.

Documents of the American Revolution, vol. viii (Transcripts), no. cxxvii.

Not 1772, as stated by Hook, Scotland and America, 31: see Records, 421.

Scots Magazine, xxxiv (1772), 272.

Acts of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland (Edinburgh, 1772).

For a full discussion of this subject, see D. Fagerstrom, "Scottish Opinion and the American Revolution", William & Mary Quarterly, 3rd ser., xi (1954), 252-75.

Moderates supported the government, whilst a number of Evangelicals (but certainly not all, by any means) openly supported the colonies and their claims. The best known of the latter was John Erskine, who published in 1769 (and republished in 1776) his pamphlet Shall I go to War with my American Brethren? Erskine argued his case from military, economic and political perspectives but perhaps his ecclesiastical points were more to the point. He was alarmed at the possibility of an Anglican episcopate in the colonies and, moreover, he objected to what he considered the coddling of Canadian Catholics.<sup>72</sup> Soon there appeared other Popular Party men ready to use fast-day sermons as an opportunity of pointing out that the war with the American colonies was just payment from heaven for a growing British tendency towards religious toleration of Roman Catholics! At the 1776 General Assembly there was a certain amount of behind-the-scenes manoeuvring and conflict, but in the end Principal Robertson and his dominating Moderate Party produced a mild and traditional address to the king, assuring the General Assembly's firm loyalty to the Crown during the "present dangerous and unnatural rebellion". 73 In the event, Scotland produced no organised opposition whatsoever to Lord North's American policy; and this was true not only in the General Assembly but also, strikingly, among the Scottish M.P.s in Parliament. All this must have played a large role in America's belief that Scotland was Loyalist to the core; and it also encouraged Scots in America to remain loyal to the Crown.

Acts of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland (Edinburgh, 1843).

790-91.

See extracts from his REFLECTIONS on the RISE, PROGRESS and probable consequences of the present contention with the COLONIES... (Edinburgh, 1774), printed in Journal of Presbyterian History, lii (1974), 362-64.